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INDIANS UPON THE ONEIDA RESERVATION IN WISCONSIN.

MAY 8, 1888.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HUDD, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 9909.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6695) to provide for the allotment of lands in severalty to the Indians upon the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin, and granting patents therefor, and for other purposes, recommend the adoption of the substitute bill reported herewith for the said original bill (H. R. 6695), and that said original bill do lay upon the table.

This measure is in the immediate and long-demanded interest of the Oneida Indians. For many years they have appealed to the Congress of the United States for this particular relief and legislative solution of the vexed problem of their citizenship that has had so long to wait after their absolute and perfected civilization.

For fifty years the Oneidas have resided on their Wisconsin reservation, which consists of 65,540 acres of land—a strip of fertile valley and some fine timber, about 12 miles long and 8 miles wide, located in Brown and Outagamie Counties, State of Wisconsin. Within 5 miles of this reservation, on one side, are the flourishing cities of Green Bay, Fort Howard, and East and West De Pere, with a combined population of not far from 20,000; within 10 miles on the other side of this reserve are the cities of Appleton and Seymour, with a population of not less than 15,000; all along the line of its length abutting a cultivated farming region of not less than 10,000 more people, so that in the midst of a busy civilization they are compelled to keep a tribal isolation.

That retards the Indian while it to a degree menaces the white man, their near neighbors, and in hardly any sense their intellectual superiors, in the matter of road making, bridge building, and commercial intercourse, that can not be free or remunerative when one party are deemed wards of the Government and the other full citizens, but whose contract and social rights are under constant agency supervision.

The Oneidas ceased to be Indians, save in name, more than a quarter of a century ago. This reservation furnished near the full complement of a company of men to fill the Wisconsin quota for the late war; many of them now on the pension-roll of this Government. They made good soldiers then and will make equally good citizens now.

There has been a steady and healthful increase of these Indians. When first settled in Wisconsin, remnants and scattered families of a

part of the so-called New York Indians, they numbered not far from 500. A late census shows them to be now exceeding 1,500 in number. They support themselves mainly by farming, having among them several well-cultivated farms; all living in frame or brick-built houses, an orderly, industrious, and virtuous people, and in many respects—barring their lack of citizenship—as well off as many of their white farmer neighbors. They have churches and schools. The Indian population is divided about equally in religious sentiment with the Methodist and Episcopal denominations, supporting a pastor for one and a rector for the other.

All children born to these Oneidas are baptized in one or the other of their churches. They now have six day schools on the reservation, and the English tongue is taught and spoken by all.

In a recent as well as in former councils and meetings of the tribe they have declared unanimously for the privilege of citizenship, and that they may hold their lands in severality. The Oneidas long ago ceased to be blanket Indians, and to-day are as competent and well prepared for citizenship as the majority of their fellows whom they seek to be citizens with.

The bill under consideration is in effect the severalty act of 1887 carried out with the one exception; instead of the United States acting as trustee for twenty-five years, this act provides for the surrender of the trust in five years from the allotment, and this is in exact accord with the expressed wish of the tribe and is fully warranted by their advanced state of civilization, and, as expressed by them in a late council held to consider this proposition, they say:

We desire to have the power of aliening our property prohibited for a period of five years after allotment, and no longer, believing that during that period of five years the Indians will become attached to their respective shares and will have made such further improvements that they will not likely soon sell or be willing to give up their homes.

The details of an allotment is based on a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated March 27, 1888, and that contains the following:

The reservation (Oneida) contains 65,540 acres. If allotted under the provisions of the act of 1887, will give each head of a family 90 acres; each single person over the age of eighteen and each orphan under eighteen years of age 44 acres, and to each other single person under eighteen years of age 24 acres.

It is in accordance with said act of 1887 that the allotment under this bill is proposed.